

SPIT ROASTING GUIDE

Choosing the Carcass

The choice of the carcass is of utmost importance if you want tasty and tender meat. Old, heavy carcasses not only take longer to cook than younger ones, but also turn out dry and tough. Make sure that one you select is that of a young, well-fed animal.

As a rule of thumb allow 1 kilo of raw meat per 3-4 people. The weight of the cooked meat tends to reduce from the raw weight and the average adult will eat approx 175-250 grams of meat. You can 'stretch' the yield of a beast by stuffing it but do not over-stuff as it can swell and burst during the cooking process.

Preparing the Carcass

A pig's carcass should be left with the head and tail on. Remember to remove the kidneys, and cook them separately if you wish. Some people cover the extremities such as the ears and tail with foil.

Balancing the meat on the spit is extremely important. If not balanced properly the rotisserie motor will be overworked and live a very short life. Lay the carcass on its side and push the spit through the tail end, guiding it so that the point emerges through the mouth. To balance the rod, hold it so each end lays across the palms of your hands; the heavy side of the meat will rotate down. There are two ways to balance the spit rod. You can either reposition the meat on the rod so that there is no heavy side, or (if you have one) you can attach a rotisserie counter balance to the spit rod. Once balanced, using wire & clamps secure the carcass to the spit rod, including the spine to the rod to avoid any movement as it rotates. Wrap the legs tightly with wire so they don't dangle and catch on the side of the spit roaster as it rotates.

Place the spit rod on the barbecue and turn on the rotisserie motor, letting it rotate enough times that you are sure the meat turns easily, evenly and its path is not obstructed by any part of the barbecue. Rebalance if necessary.

Liberal dose the carcass with either vinegar or oil and a heavy amount of salt and score the fatty skin with a knife for great crackling. You can also season the inside of the stomach cavity. If you like, season again towards the end of the cooking time.

A drip pan on the base of the spit may avoid flare ups. If you choose to use one, place about an inch of liquid in it. Marinades, vinegar, juice, beer, wine or just plain water can be used in the drip pan, depending on your preference for flavor. The liquid will steam up into the food adding both moisture and flavor to the meat.

Monitoring the Carcass whilst cooking

For great crackling, a pig should be cooked on high for the first 20-30 minutes, and then turn the temperature down to medium for the remaining cooking time.

Make sure you check the food at various times during the cooking process. Sometimes the meat may shrink and the forks may need to be adjusted, so keep a clean pair of pliers handy just in case.

Fully enclosed gas rotisserie spits tend to reduce cooking time over charcoal or open-style roasting methods as they offer shelter from the wind and use reflective stainless steel. As a very rough guide (as it will vary pending the beast, temperature and how thawed/cold the beast is) you should allow the following time to cook:

25kg whole pig: 4 hours

35kg whole pig: 5 hours

45kg whole pig: 6 hours

Always use a meat thermometer to insure the meat has been cooked thoroughly before serving. After a few hours of cooking, insert an instant-read meat thermometer into the thickest part of the hind leg. A pig should register about 170 F, and lamb about 140 F, to be done. If you don't have a thermometer, pierce the thickest part of the beast with a skewer or knife. The juices should run clear, without any trace of pink.

If the crackling is well done but the meat underneath isn't ready, you can remove it as a snack. Be sure to baste the exposed flesh to ensure it does not dry out. With all of the crackle on there is normally sufficient fat under the skin of a pig to provide a good 'natural' basting.

Carving the Carcass

Ideally, remove the spit rod and allow your beast to rest for about 30 minutes before beginning the carving process. Some people prefer to keep to leave the partially carved beast over a low heat, however it will affect the balance of the beast once partially carved so be sure to carve evenly or turn the rotisserie motor off.

Carve off the crackling and serve separately.

If the beast was stuffed, cut the string and open the belly, then remove the stuffing and serve it separately.

Remove the larger joints of meat, such as the legs and shoulders. Slice the meat of these joints thinly across the grain, starting at the shank end and carving around towards the bone.

Remove the loins from each side of the spine and carve the meat crosswise into slices.

Separate the base of the ribs from the spine and cut into individual ribs.

Remember to count all your fingers before and after carving your beast!

Enjoy!